

Rules of the Game

Types and Templates (Part Four)

By Skip Williams



Last week, we looked at types and templates by considering a few more ways a creature's type can change. This week, we'll take a long look at what happens when you apply a template to a creature.

Applying a Template

As noted in Part One, a template is a set of instructions for changing a creature in some profound way. Templates can be acquired during a creature's lifetime, or the creature might inherit the template at birth.

Applying a template requires getting familiar with the template and the changes it works on a creature; page 291 in the *Monster Manual* gives tips on reading a template. Once you know what a template does, refer to the step-by-step procedure on page 293 of the *Monster Manual* to apply the template. Here's an overview of the process. Remember that not all templates affect all the things noted here. If so, the template description usually will not have all the sections included here and you can just skip the step noted here.

- Check the **Size** and **Type** entry in the template.

If the template changes the creature's size or type, this entry tells you what those changes are.

When a creature's size changes, refer to Table 4-2 in the *Monster Manual* to determine how the creature's **natural armor**, **Armor Class**, and **attack rolls** change. A change in size also can change a creature's **Constitution**, **Dexterity**, and **Strength** scores. Do not change any **ability scores** now, see the notes under ability scores, below.

If the template changes the creature's type, make the change in type. Add the **augmented subtype** for the creature's original type to the creature's type entry, along with any other **subtypes** the template specifies. For example, a lion with the celestial template changes type to **magical beast**, so it gains the augmented animal subtype along with the magical beast type. The celestial lion also acquires the **extraplanar subtype** when encountered on the Material Plane.

Also, our example celestial lion has the traits of the magical beast type -- **darkvision** with a range of 60 feet, **low-light vision**, proficiency with the creature's own natural weaponry, no armor proficiency, and the need to eat, sleep, and breathe. The celestial lion still has the features of the animal type -- d8 **Hit Dice**, **base attack bonus** equal to 3/4 total Hit Dice, good **Fortitude** and **Reflex saves**, and **skill points** equal to 2 points + **Intelligence** modifier per Hit Die (minimum 1 point per die, with quadruple skill points for the first die).

- Check the template's Hit Dice and Hit Points entry.

If the template adds any Hit Dice to the creature, use Table 3-2 in the *Player's Handbook* to determine if the creature gains any additional feats. If so, add them now. Likewise, make any changes to the creature's base attack bonus, **base save bonuses**, and skill points to reflect the extra Hit Dice. (You can make these four changes in any order.) If the template changes the size of the creature's Hit Dice, make any changes to the creature's hit points when you apply the effects of any changes to the creature's Constitution score (see below).

- Check the Abilities entry in the template.

Make any changes in the creature's ability scores as specified in this section. The information in this section should account for any change in size (see above). When in doubt, a look at the example creature provided with the template should clarify exactly how much the creature's abilities should change.

- Apply the effects from any ability score changes you've made.

Completing this step can take awhile. You can perform changes to ability scores in any order, but I suggest the order presented below. You'll need to check several other entries in the template to correctly apply ability score changes, as noted in the sections that follow.

Constitution: Before applying any Constitution changes, check the Hit Dice and Hit Points entry in the template. Some templates change the number or size of the creature's Hit Dice or both. Some templates change previously acquired Hit Dice and continue to change any additional Hit Dice the creature gains. Most templates, however, change only the creature's racial Hit Dice (that is, the Hit Dice it has before adding any class levels). Most templates are fairly explicit about what happens to the creature's Hit Dice, so just follow the instructions in the template.

When you know the size and number of the creature's Hit Dice, recalculate the creature's hit points using the modifier from the creature's new Constitution modifier for each Hit Die (whatever its size).

Check the template's saves entry for any changes to its base Fortitude save, or for any special Fortitude save bonuses it has. Apply the new Constitution modifier to the base save. Also apply the effects of any applicable feats, such as Great Fortitude.

Also apply the Constitution modifier to the creature's Concentration skill score.

Dexterity: The creature's new Dexterity modifier affects its initiative bonus, Armor Class, Reflex saves, and some of its attacks.

Changing the creature's initiative bonus usually is just a matter of applying its new Dexterity modifier, but check the template's Initiative entry for any additional changes that might be required.

When recalculating Armor Class, remember to apply the effects of the creature's new size and natural armor bonus, and also any changes specified in the template's Armor Class entry.

If the creature wears armor, check the armor's maximum Dexterity modifier to be sure the creature can get the full benefit of its Dexterity modifier to Armor Class.

Check the template's saves entry for any changes to its base Reflex save, or for any special Reflex save bonuses it has. Apply the new Dexterity modifier to the base save.

If the creature has any ranged attacks (including spell-based ones), check the template's base attack entry for any changes to its base attack, and add the new Dexterity modifier to calculate its new **ranged attack** bonus; remember to apply the creature's new size modifier, too. Likewise, apply the new Dexterity modifier to any melee attacks the creature uses along with the Weapon Finesse feat.

Dexterity affects many skills, so be sure to apply the new Dexterity modifier to all the creature's Dexterity-based

skills. If the creature uses the Hide skill, apply the special modifier from its new size (see the Hide skill description) to its Hide score.

Strength: The creature's new Strength modifier affects its attack bonus for melee attacks (unless the creature is using the Weapon Finesse feat), melee damage, some ranged damage (such as thrown weapons or attacks with mighty ranged weapons), and its grapple bonus.

To determine the new attack and grapple bonuses, start with the creature's new base attack modifier (if any), and apply the Strength modifier. Don't forget the creature's size modifier when calculating the new attack bonus or the special size modifier for the grapple bonus (see the section on grappling in Chapter 8 of the *Player's Handbook*).

Apply the Strength modifier to the creature's damage ratings. Remember to use 1-1/2 times the new Strength modifier for two-handed attacks and for attacks with single natural weapons. Likewise, apply only half the damage bonus to off-hand weapon attacks and to secondary natural weapon attacks. Check the template's Attacks and Damage entries, plus the example creature provided with template, to determine which weaponry receives which damage bonus.

Apply the new Strength modifier to any Strength-based skills the creature has, such as Climb, Jump, and Swim.

The creature's new Strength score affects several other things, such as the creature's carrying capacity, but you usually don't need to bother with those if you're just using the creature for a single encounter.

Intelligence: The creature's new Intelligence modifier affects its Intelligence-based skills. If the template is an inherited template, the new Intelligence modifier affects its skill points, and that might require you to reallocate the creature's skill points. Changes to a creature's Intelligence score do not retroactively change a creature's skill points, so an Intelligence change from an acquired template usually doesn't change a creature's skill points, but check the Skills entry in the template description to be sure. For example, a creature that gains the zombie template loses its mind and also loses all its skill ranks.

Wisdom: Check the template's Saves entry for any changes to its base **Will save**, or for any special Will save bonuses it has. Apply the new **Wisdom** modifier to the base save. The creature's new Wisdom modifier also affects its Wisdom-based skills, such as Listen and Spot, and its Will save. Be sure to apply the effects of applicable feats such as Iron Will and Alertness.

Charisma: The creature's new **Charisma** modifier affects its Charisma-based skills, such as Bluff and Intimidate. Be sure to apply the effects of applicable feats such as Persuasive and Negotiator.

- Check the template's Speed entry and change the creature's **speed** rating or ratings.

A creature's speed ratings can affect its skills. For example, land speed affects the Jump skill (see the Jump skill description). Having a climb or swim speed also adds a +8 bonus on Climb or Swim skill checks and allows the creature to "take 10" on such checks more readily; see the Modes of Movement entry on page 311 of the *Monster Manual* for details.

- Check the template's Special Attacks and Special Qualities entries.

Calculate the save **DCs** for any special attacks the template grants according to the notes on page 293 in the *Monster Manual*.

- Consider any Special Attacks and Special Qualities the base creature has remaining.

The template might remove some or all of the base creature's special attacks and special qualities. For any special attacks or special qualities that remain after the template is applied, recalculate any save DCs or damage using the creature's new ability scores and size.

- Add any skill bonuses from the template (unless you've taken account of them in a previous step).
- Add any feat from the template (unless you've taken account of them in a previous step).
- Adjust the creature's CR according to the instructions in the template.

In Conclusion

That wraps up our look at templates and creature types. When dealing with this pair of topics, remember that both these things are intended to add some spice and variety to the game as quickly and simply as possible. Whenever you encounter any difficulties with a template or a change in creature's type, choose the simplest alternative.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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